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FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2034
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3020
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1317
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3360
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2746
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 000288

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN, DEPT FOR P (WILLIAM BURNS)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/02/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ POLITICAL SCIENTIST DESCRIBES OPPOSITION'S
PLANS

REF: A. A. BISHKEK 245

[B. B. BISHKEK 226](#) AND PREVIOUS

[C. C. BISHKEK 119](#)

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Classified By: Classified By: Amb. Tatiana C. Gfoeller, Reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Ambassador met with long-time Embassy contact and political insider Valentin Bogatyrev on March 31 to discuss the current political situation in the country. Bogatyrev was convinced that former Presidential Administration Head Sadyrkulov had been murdered, either because he presented a political threat to President Bakiyev or because of his personal conflict with the President's brother Janysh. He said the opposition had united around a platform of ousting Bakiyev, and they planned to field multiple candidates in the July Presidential election, both to drain support from Bakiyev in the regions and to avoid making any one candidate the target for government harassment. Bogatyrev said that the unpopular Bakiyev was re-orienting Kyrgyzstan's foreign policy toward Russia, while also moving toward increasing authoritarianism. END SUMMARY

WHO KILLED SADYRKULOV?

[1](#)2. (C) Ambassador met March 31 with Valentin Bogatyrev, a political analyst and long-time Embassy contact. Bogatyrev had been close to former Presidential Chief of Staff Medet Sadyrkulov and former director of the Kyrgyz International Institute for Strategic Studies, Sergei Slepchenko, both of whom were killed in a suspicious car "accident" March 13 (Ref B). Bogatyrev had no doubt that Sadyrkulov was murdered, but was unsure why he was killed. Bogatyrev said that "everyone" was aware of Sadyrkulov's political project to unite the opposition around former Vice Prime Minister Elvira Ibraimova (Ref C); the Bakiyev regime saw this project as a real political threat and therefore may have wanted to take Sadyrkulov down.

13. (C) Bogatyrev said that a second possibility was that Sadyrkulov's death had been ordered by Janysh Bakiyev, President Bakiyev's brother and head of the Presidential Security Service, because of personal rivalries between them.

Bogatyrev conjectured that Janysh may have used a criminal group from the south of Kyrgyzstan to carry out the act, using explosive "powder" provided by the security services. Bogatyrev knew that Ibraimova had been threatened, but did not believe that she or other opposition leaders were in immediate physical danger since they do not currently present a political threat to Bakiyev.

OPPOSITION: GUNNING FOR THE PRESIDENT BEFORE THEY GET GUNNED DOWN?

14. (C) Bogatyrev claimed to be in regular contact with many members of the opposition, though he avoided mentioning any personal role in their activities. Bogatyrev said that Sadyrkulov, with his network of contacts and tactical abilities, had been indispensable to cobbling together the disparate elements of the opposition. Asked if the opposition could pull together without Sadyrkuklov, Bogatyrev said that they had essentially united around a platform of ousting Bakiyev from power. He said the opposition planned to field multiple candidates for the July Presidential election, both to drain support from Bakiyev in the regions and to avoid making any one candidate an exclusive target for government harassment. Later in the campaign, at the very least by a second round of the election, they would select one candidate, likely Ibraimova, but possibly former MP Bolotbek Sherniyazov, or former Security Council Chair Miroslav Niyazov.

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15. (C) Bogatyrev argued that Bakiyev is actually very weak politically right now, with his approval ratings below 10% and the country facing a difficult financial situation, and Bakiyev would certainly falsify the July election. Bogatyrev said that the opposition hopes that exit polls and observers will limit Bakiyev's ability to cheat, but the opposition is also preparing to approach election officials at the local level in advance of the vote and warn them not to cheat.

16. (C) According to Bogatyrev, there are two schools of thought within the opposition on how to go about doing that. The "light"-oriented opposition would use moral suasion. The "dark"-oriented opposition is discussing threatening election officials with "burning down their houses" and "running them out of their villages" if they participate in cheating. The "dark" threat would go something like this: "Bakiyev may be powerful but he is far away in Bishkek. You live in our village, your house is in our village, your children go to our village school. We will take vengeance on you if you cheat and Bakiyev will be too far away to help you."

17. (C) Bogatyrev expected the opposition to be successful in showing their power in the northern regions of Talas, Naryn, and Issyk Kul, but believed the opposition's ultimate success would depend on its ability to acquire resources to fund their efforts. Bogatyrev said that potential wealthy backers existed, but that they were waiting to see who is most likely to win power before getting involved.

THE GEOPOLITICAL SHADOWS BEHIND IT ALL

18. (C) President Bakiyev, according to Bogatyrev, was trying to re-orient Kyrgyzstan away from a multi-vector foreign policy and towards Russia, and away from its relatively liberal past towards authoritarianism. Bakiyev was doing this, with some success, by appealing to nostalgia for the Soviet Union. Bogatyrev did not believe that Bakiyev intended to break his promise to the Russians and let Manas

Air Base remain, but at the same time, Bakiyev wanted to avoid angering the United States before the July Presidential election. Therefore, Bogatyrev reasoned, Bakiyev would try to drag out negotiations over Manas Air Base. Bogatyrev added that his contacts in Moscow believe that Russia is having second thoughts about backing the unpopular Bakiyev, realizing that doing so could endanger its position in Central Asia. "There are people right now in Moscow dealing cards with different faces on them," he said. "Each card is a potential Kyrgyz President and the Russians are trying to figure out who to back."

COMMENT

19. (C) Over the past couple of years, Bogatyrev has been a reliable reporter of Administration thinking and plans. He has often been able to accurately presage Bakiyev's actions, likely due to his connection to Sadyrkulov. He remains well connected to Kyrgyzstan's political elite, and his description of the opposition's current election strategy is generally consistent with what opposition figures have told us about running multiple candidates. We still doubt, however, that the opposition will be able to unite behind a single candidate.

GFOELLER